

Artist Websites - An Introduction

Presenters: Shawn Rossiter & Steve Coray

Determining the best type of website for you

Determine the objective of your website. Without a specific purpose, how can you create a solution?

1. Provide Information about you, your art, your career.
2. Solicit communication on your work or encourage a studio visit.
3. Show a portfolio of your work. Recent work or a retrospective. One style/medium or all.
3. Build image.
5. Sell your work.

Define your audience

1. Are you principally interested in exposing yourself to galleries in order to get representation?
2. Do you just want family and friends to be able to see what you're up to?
3. Are you looking to sell your work online to local and national clients.
4. All of these? Which is the most important?

Determine your content

Must be based on your purpose and your audience

Which of the three basic types of artist websites best suit your needs?

- A. Postcard site
- B. Portfolio site
- C. Sales site, On-line gallery

Getting Started

1. Look at other sites for inspiration. Jot down ideas.
2. Determine what your design needs are. Do you need someone to prep your images? Someone to 'design' the site? Someone to create the html? Someone to interact with your web hosting? There are different skill sets for web design and production. Which do you have or want to have? How computer literate do you want to be? Do you have the time and energy to DIY? Different solutions include:
 - A. Site designed, built and maintained by artist
 - B. Site designed by artist, but built and maintained by a programmer
 - C. Site designed by a designer and built/maintained by a programmer
3. Determine what you can (want to) spend.

The design and production process

Determining the features your site will offer

1. Basic components
 - A. Welcome/Intro. Importance of copywriting to establishing an image.
 - B. Artist Bio/vitae
 - C. Image galleries (thumbnails, full-size images)
 - D. Contact the artist
 - E. Upcoming events, links to galleries, etc.
 - F. Miscellaneous extras
 - a. Forms/Database (to submit or request information)
 - b. Message Boards (to provide a forum)
 - c. More "sophisticated" graphics (Frames, Flash)
 - d. Content "Search"
 - e. Shopping Cart
 - f. Counters (one way to measure success)

2. Molding the elements

- A. Design structure - How many levels of pages will you have? How many image options? What information will you provide? (Use a flowchart to organize your ideas)
- B. Navigation structure - Type of menu? How many options? Will you have submenus?
- C. Determine basic design elements - color, fonts, styles, backgrounds
- D. Extras: Include ecommerce options? Guestbook? Other forms? Tracking systems? Flash animation?

3. Determine what webhosting package works best for you. How many megabytes of space do you need? How much bandwidth or transfer? What special features (PHP, MySQL, forms, commerce) do you need?

Production: Building your site

1. Prepare your images for your site. Make sure you have good reproductions of your images, in a digital format (preferably jpeg) at a dpi of 72. Name your images in a way that will allow you to organize them easily on your site.
2. Create and organize your other materials: your bio, artist statement, personal photograph, links, purchasing info, contact info, exhibition history, awards, etc.
3. Create your templates including your menu structure. Do not add items yet. Make sure your templates are complete and functional and then you can begin using them to create individual pages.
4. Create your meta tags - the words, phrases etc, that will be embedded in your pages that will attract web surfers to your page.
5. Create individual pages, titling them accordingly, adding meta tags.
6. Upload, experiment, fine tune.

Marketing

How to promote your site

Just because you create great art doesn't mean that it will get sold. And just because you have created a powerful website doesn't mean that anybody will actually visit it. Your efforts can help ensure you will get lots of visitors.

Some issues to consider include:

- A. Meta tags, descriptions, etc. (use by crawlers and search engines)
- B. Submitting to search engines
- C. Letterhead, business cards, flyers, brochures, etc.
- D. Directories (like AoU)
- E. Exchanging links
- F. Ad banners
- G. Galleries
- F. E-Mail signatures
- G. Other ideas?

Leftovers

A few definitions

Webhosting - The physical location where your files are stored "online" and accessible to people on the web. There is usually a monthly fee for this service.

Domain Name - The "name" you want for your webpage; what you want people to type onto the computer to pull up your site. There is usually a yearly fee to register this name as your property.

Bytes - A unit of measurement for file size. Will determine how much you can put on your site.

HTML - The basic computer code or language for creating websites

Flash - A computer code for creating animated web pages and other effects

PHP - A computer code that allows interaction between visitors to a website.

Internet Service Provider - The service that allows your computer to use a phone line or cable to access the internet.

Browser - The computer software used to view pages on the internet.

Website - The whole of your web pages.

Webpage - Individual pages that make up your website.

Ecommerce - The process of doing business on the internet. May include shopping cart technology and credit card service.



Some random suggestions

Image files - format: Use gif for text images and jpeg for artwork and photographs

Image files - resolution and size: Should be 72 dpi (great for web but hard to print out). Large pictures should be max 500K, thumbnails about 20 K.

Avoid using Flash or other bells and whistles. Focus should be your artwork, not the website designer's tricks.

Avoid using frames, unless it is absolutely necessary. Some browsers don't "like" frames.

Visitor Empathy: Remember, your visitor may not have the same computer, connection speed, monitor size, browser that you have. You want to build it so everyone can see it comfortably.

Register your domain name as 'MyName.com' without extras such as fineart, gallery, etc. Register it as .com

Include a guest book on your site and develop ways for people to sign it.

A few hosting options

For most sites, without flash and lots of stuff, you can get by with 50 MB of storage and 1000 MB of transfer.

CATALOG.COM

\$35/year

Domain registration

50 MB space

1 GB Transfer/month

1 email account

PHP, MySQL

EZ-WEB-HOSTING.COM

\$6/\$10

100/300 MB storage

1000/10,000 MB bandwidth

Email options included

YAHOO

\$12/mo

Includes domain registration

Email accounts

100 sub domains

25 GB data transfer

Site search

2 GB storage

Email forms

FTP

stats

20MEGSFREE.COM

\$6/\$10 (free option requires pop-up ads)

50/200 MB storage

2/5 GB bandwidth

ftp

Email

XMISSION \$19

Includes internet access

3 email accounts

100 MB storage

ftp

Service components

1.. Web page vs. web site (Ex. Gallery page vs. your own site)

2. Owning a domain name (purchase and renewal)

3. Hosting (Storage space, mirroring, bandwidth (=files x # of visits), scripting, HTML)

4. Email

5. Internet access

Software

Photo Editing:

Adobe Photoshop CS. 600

Adobe Photoshop Elements. 85

JASC Paintshop Pro 100

Microsoft PictureIt. 40

Gimp (www.gimp.org). 0 (freeware)

WebPage Editors:

Adobe GoLive CS 400

Adobe GoLive 6.0 150

Macromedia Dreamweaver 250

Microsoft FrontPage. 150

Namo WebEditor 6 Suite 75

Netscape Composer. 0

Understanding some issues of digital Images (for conversation)

A. File sizes, resolution (Bytes, Mb, Gb)

B. File formats (JPG, GIF)

C. Color management and calibration

D. Photographing or scanning your artwork

